

We claim:

1. A computer-implemented method for processing plural rights expressions associated with an item for use in a system for controlling use of the item in accordance with the rights expressions, the method comprising:

receiving a request to use an item, the item having associated rights expressions governing use of the item;

returning one or more rights expressions including conditions that must be satisfied in order to use the item; and

processing the returned rights expressions in a manner to facilitate selection of the returned rights expressions in order to use the item in accordance with the selected rights expressions.

2. The method of claim 1, wherein the returned rights expressions specify respective manners of use of the item.

3. The method of claim 2, wherein the conditions include conditions that must be satisfied in order to exercise the respective manners of use for the item.

4. The method of claim 1, wherein the processing step comprises:  
prioritizing the returned rights expressions based on one or more conditions of the returned rights expressions, so as to facilitate selection of the returned rights expressions.

5. The method of claim 4, wherein the prioritizing step further comprises:  
employing a usage cost associated with enforcement of a condition of the prioritized conditions, wherein the usage cost includes at least one of a term usage cost associate with the condition, and a preference usage cost associated with a preference for enforcement of the condition.

6. The method of claim 5, wherein the prioritizing step further comprises:

employing the usage cost in combination with a preference for the enforcement of the condition.

7. The method of claim 4, wherein the prioritizing step is accomplished with a prioritizing plug-in application.

8. The method of claim 7, wherein the prioritizing plug-in application is configurable on a device.

9. The method of claim 4, wherein the returned rights expressions include a path comprising a chain of rights expressions, and the prioritizing step comprises:

recursively prioritizing each rights expression of the chain of rights expressions.

10. The method of claim 1, wherein the processing step comprises:

filtering one or more rights expressions from the returned rights expressions to facilitate selection of a rights expression.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the processing step comprises:

prioritizing one or more conditions of the filtered rights expressions to facilitate selection of a rights expression.

12. The method of claim 10, wherein the filtering step is accomplished with a filtering plug-in application.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the filtering plug-in application is configurable on a device.

14. The method of claim 10, wherein the returned rights expressions include a grant path comprising a chain of grants, and the filtering step comprises:

recursively filtering each grant of the chain of grants of the grant path.

15. The method of claim 1, wherein the returned rights expressions include a grant.

16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:  
performing the processing step on a device in order to access the item with the device.

17. The method of claim 16, wherein the device comprises a handheld device.

18. The method of claim 16, wherein the device comprises a rendering device.

19. The method of claim 16, wherein the device comprises a general-purpose computer device.

20. The method of claim 1, wherein the rights expression information is grammar-based.

21. The method of claim 2, wherein the item includes one of digital content, a service, an abstract object, a resource, and goods.

22. The method of claim 6, wherein the usage cost and the preference are user-configurable.

23. The method of claim 6, wherein the usage cost and the preference are predetermined.

24. The method of claim 6, wherein the usage cost and the preference are initially set to default values.

25. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

prompting a user for values for the usage cost and the preference.

26. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

determining values for the usage cost and the preference based on an output from a neural network trained with previous input values from a user for the usage cost and the preference.

27. The method of claim 6, further comprising:

determining values for the usage cost and the preference based on an output from a neural network trained with previous input values from a plurality of users for the usage cost and the preference.

28. The method of claim 1, wherein the processing step includes at least one of filtering, weighting, and prioritizing steps for granting one of access to the item and permission to use the item.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the filtering step includes filtering the returned rights expressions based on a filter profile.

30. The method of claim 29, wherein the filter profile includes filter criteria including at least one of a rights expression type, a minimum value, a maximum value, a rights expression type operator, a minimum value operator, and a maximum value operator.

31. The method of claim 1, wherein the processing step includes calculating condition term usage costs based on respective terms of the conditions.

32. The method of claim 1, wherein the processing step includes calculating condition usage preferences for the conditions based on a user preference profile including a list of respective condition type name and positive rank score value pairs.

33. The method of claim 32, further comprising fine tuning the user preference profile based on previous user selection of the rights expressions to exercise with the use of a selection strength index associated with each condition type.

34. The method of claim 33, further comprising employing a horizontal asymptotic function to ensure that the value of the selection strength index reaches a maximum value at a predetermined pace but does not exceed the maximum value.

35. The method of claim 5, wherein the term usage cost includes at least one of a usage cost corresponding to a fee associated with the access to the item, and a territory usage cost corresponding to a territory restriction with respect to the access to the item.

36. The method of claim 1, wherein the rights expressions include at least one of licenses and grants.

37. A system for processing plural rights expressions associated with an item for controlling use of the item in accordance with the rights expressions, the system comprising:

means for receiving a request to use an item, the item having associated rights expressions governing use of the item;

means for returning one or more rights expressions including conditions that must be satisfied in order to use the item; and

means for processing the returned rights expressions in a manner to facilitate selection of the returned rights expressions in order to use the item in accordance with the selected rights expressions.

38. The system of claim 37, wherein the means for receiving, the means for returning, and the means for processing comprise devices of a computer system.

39. The system of claim 37, wherein the means for receiving, the means for returning, and the means for processing comprise computer-readable instructions stored on a computer readable medium.

40. A device for processing plural rights expressions associated with an item for controlling use of the item in accordance with the rights expressions, the device comprising:

means for receiving a request to use an item, the item having associated rights expressions governing use of the item;

means for returning one or more rights expressions including conditions that must be satisfied in order to use the item; and

means for processing the returned rights expressions in a manner to facilitate selection of the returned rights expressions in order to use the item in accordance with the selected rights expressions.